

Awakening

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TITLE: Awakening

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SYNOPSIS: When an old friend of Lee's takes an interest in Amanda, he suddenly gets a wake-up call from his true feelings. Meanwhile, a congressman is murdered and it's up to them to solve the case.

AWAKENING

PART 1

Amanda King walked into her den to find her mother, Dottie West, watching the news.

"I finally got the boys off to school. I tell you, it's getting harder and harder to get them out of the house on time," Amanda said, slightly winded.

Dottie sat staring at the television. "I just can't believe it. It's so tragic."

"What is, Mother?"

"Didn't you hear? That nice looking congressman...Marks? March?"

"Marsh, Mother. What about him?"

"He was killed in a car crash yesterday."

"What!?"

"Yes, it's terrible. His poor wife...and that sweet little girl of theirs. He really had big plans, too. He was definitely going to make some changes happen."

'Why didn't we hear about this before it hit the news?' Amanda thought. 'The Agency's really gonna be buzzing this morning.'

"Amanda, are listening?"

"What...oh, yes...I'm sorry, Mother...yes, that's terrible."

"I swear, Amanda, sometimes I don't know where your head's at. Well, you'd better get going. You don't want to be late for work."

"Oh, no, Lee's picking me up this morning."

"Oh, yes, Lee," Dottie smiled. "You know, you really ought to invite him to dinner some night."

"Mother, I've told you before...there is nothing going on between Mr. Stetson and myself. He's my boss."

The doorbell rang and as Amanda got up to answer it, Dottie said, more to herself than to her daughter, "That doesn't mean there couldn't be." To Amanda she called, "Will you be home for dinner, dear?"

Amanda opened the door for Lee, "No..." she looked at Lee, "I have a feeling I'm going to be working late. See you later, Mother."

Walking to the car, Lee placed his hand on the small of Amanda's back. "You heard?' He asked.

"It's all over the news." She replied.

"Tell me about it."

The Agency was, indeed, buzzing. As suspected, sources revealed that Congressman Marsh's accident was no accident. Upon further investigation, it was found that his brakes had been tampered with. Lee and Amanda were assigned the case. Lee suggested Amanda make friends with the new computer system and delve into Marsh's past while he went to interview the congressman's staff.

"Shouldn't I go with you?" Amanda asked.

"No. We'll get more done, and faster, if we split up. A congressman's been killed. The president isn't going to want to tip toe around on this one. He's gonna want answers...fast."

"So, why not give it to the FBI?"

Lee grimaced. "He doesn't want that heavy of footfalls."

Amanda chuckled. "See ya later."

"All right," he called as he went out the door to their office.

It was nearing the end of the day when Lee returned. Marsh's staff had not been very helpful. He did find evidence that somebody had carefully searched the congressman's office, but nobody had seen anything out of the ordinary. Amanda had offered what little background information she had. Marsh had mainly adopted those involved with environmental issues and the plight of the homeless as his constituents. However, his pet peeve had always been corruption within the government. He continuously vowed to put an end to it. Marsh very well could have made political enemies and, even though it seemed unlikely, it seemed their list of suspects would have to come from within the government itself.

Lee and Amanda decided to call it a night and were wrapping things up when Lee received a phone call.

Lee picked up the receiver, "Stetson."

His face lit up as he recognized the voice on the other end.

"Well, I don't believe it! How've you been?"

Amanda, curiosity peaked, feigned a last minute clean up as she sat at her desk listening to the one-sided conversation.

Sitting back down behind his desk, Lee let out a boisterous laugh.

"Where are you?" he continued. "You're kidding, when did you get in...and you're just calling me now...well, I guess I can let it slide this time...tomorrow? One o'clock sounds fine...no, you pick me up - I'm sure everyone's gonna want to see you...yeah, that's great...see you tomorrow."

Lee leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands behind his head.

"I don't believe it."

"Don't believe what?" Amanda asked.

"That was an old friend of mine - I haven't seen in six years." He smiled, remembering all the good times he had with his friend.

"An old 'girlfriend'?" she asked slyly.

"No, an old friend," he answered, putting on his jacket and getting ready to leave. "Doug...Doug Phillips. He used to work here, until he was injured in the line of duty. He had to go on permanent

disability...bum leg...but he was the best there ever was."

"I thought you were the best," Amanda said sarcastically as she, too, got up to leave.

Lee gave her an annoyed look as he passed her to open the door.

"Anyway," he smiled again, "he's back in D.C. and he wants to have lunch tomorrow." He held the door open for her.

"Well, that sounds wonderful. He must be quite a guy - you seem awfully excited."

"Oh, yeah, Doug's a great guy," he said as he followed her out the door.

The next morning found Amanda in the living room of the Marsh home. Earlier, she had told Lee she thought it would be a good idea to re-interview Mrs. Marsh. Lee told her to leave her alone, that she'd just lost her husband, and that Amanda was just spinning her wheels. He was convinced the murder was politically motivated, but he humored her and told her to go ahead without him.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting, Mrs. King." Mrs. Marsh announced as she entered the living room and sat across from Amanda.

"Oh, that's quite all right, and please, call me Amanda."

"All right, Amanda...if you'll call me Laura."

"All right."

"I must tell you," Laura began. "I was quite surprised to see you here again. I told you everything I know already."

"I know, but I was hoping that maybe you may have remembered something else. Something that may have slipped your mind when we last spoke."

"No...no, I can't think of anything."

Amanda felt the woman was holding something back. "Nothing? Perhaps something your husband was involved with?"

"You mean politically?"

"Or personally," Amanda added wryly.

Laura diverted her eyes from Amanda and shifted nervously in her chair.

"So, you found out." She said sadly.

"Yes," Amanda lied. "It's my job to find all the secrets. I'm sorry if this is painful for you."

"No...no, it's all right. I'm just a little surprised your investigation took you in that direction. It was three years ago." Laura stood and began to nervously pace the floor. "The affair only

lasted three months. It was over and done with. Frank made a mistake. He came back to me, and I forgave him. I know it sounds silly, but I think his little fling brought us closer together."

"But, you were angry?"

"Of course I was angry...and hurt, but, as I said, it was over and done with."

Amanda looked at her doubtfully.

"Now, wait a minute, you're not suggesting that I..."

Amanda held up her hand. "I'm not suggesting anything. I just..."

"Mrs. King, I think you better leave. I'm very tired."

"Just two more questions, then I'll leave you alone."

"What is it?"

"Did you know the woman?" Amanda asked, tentatively.

"No. Frank never told me, and I never asked. I didn't want to know. I just wanted to forget the whole thing."

Getting up to leave, Amanda asked, "Did anyone else know about the affair?"

"Not that I know of. I certainly didn't tell anyone, and I doubt Frank did. He was ashamed. He really didn't want anybody to know - and not just because he was a politician."

"Thank you for your time, Laura, and, again, I am sorry." Amanda turned to leave.

"Mrs. King...Amanda...I really did love my husband...very much."

"I know." Amanda said, putting a comforting hand on Laura's shoulder.

Amanda arrived back at the agency to see the commotion in the bullpen. Lee's friend, Doug was obviously well-liked by everyone as they were gathered around him, listening attentively to his stories of how he had spent the past six years. He was a handsome man, well-built, standing 6' 2" with dark hair, dark eyes and a pleasant smile.

Not wanting to interrupt the reunion, Amanda hung back a while.

"We'd better get going if we're gonna have lunch," Lee told Doug, clapping him on the back.

The circle of agents broke up with last minute handshakes and warm welcomes and Doug looked in Amanda's direction. His eyes locked with hers; he was mesmerized by her beauty.

Without breaking his gaze, he whispered to Lee, "Who is that?"

Lee followed Doug's gaze to see Amanda standing there. He hadn't seen his friend in six years, but he recognized his interest. A pang of jealousy blind-sided Lee, but he quickly quashed it.

"C'mon, I'll introduce you." He managed a smile.

As the two men walked toward her, Amanda noticed that, while Doug favored his right leg, he still carried himself very well.

"Amanda," Lee started, "I'd like you to meet Doug Phillips. Doug...Amanda King."

Amanda offered Doug her hand and he took it graciously as he gazed into her eyes. "It is definitely a pleasure to meet you, Ms. King."

"Misses, actually," Amanda smiled.

"Oh? So you're married, huh?" Doug sounded disappointed.

"Divorced."

"Oh." He said, his smile returning. "So, are you an agent?"

Lee sensed that jealous feeling creep up on him again. "She helps me out from time to time...part time really...sort of an agent in training," he said, somewhat agitated by their sudden rapport.

Amanda was clearly offended by Lee's casual description of her position within the Agency. Even Francine started referring to her as his partner, but, after all this time, he still refused. 'He probably doesn't even think of me as a person,' she thought. The look she gave him seemed to go unnoticed by Doug.

"Lee and I were just going to have lunch. Would you care to join us, Amanda?" Doug asked.

Amanda glanced at Lee and, seeing he was obviously not pleased with the suggestion, declined.

"I do need to speak with you when you get back," she said to Lee.

"Oh?"

"I got a little more information from Mrs. Marsh."

"Is it important?" He suddenly showed interest.

"You probably wouldn't thing so." She walked away in a huff, not giving him a chance to respond.

PART 2

Amanda was just finishing a conversation with Francine when Lee and

Doug came back from lunch. At the same time, Billy poked his head out of his office.

"Scarecrow, I need to see you a minute."

Lee disappeared into Billy's office and Francine headed off in a different direction. Amanda picked up a stack of files from the desk in front of her, turned, and ran smack into Doug, who was standing behind her. The files spilled out of her hands and scattered on the floor. They both laughed and apologized as they knelt to pick up the files. When they stood back up Doug handed Amanda the files he had retrieved.

"So, how was your lunch?" Amanda smiled up at him.

"It was nice. It was good to see Lee again after all these years. Of course, I think dinner would be much nicer...if I could talk you into joining me."

Amanda became flustered and almost dropped the files again. "You're not having dinner with Lee?"

"Tonight? No. I'm in town on vacation for a few weeks. I'm actually thinking of moving back to D.C."

"Really? Well, that would be nice...I mean, for you...if that's what...you know, tonight's really not a good night...we have this case..." Amanda stammered.

"Yes, the congressman...Lee was telling me. I understand, believe me. I've been there."

"Yes, well..."

"Another night perhaps? I would really like to get to know you better."

Amanda looked at Doug shyly, then picked up a notepad and pen from the desk, wrote her number down and handed him the paper.

"Why don't you call me?"

"I will," he replied, taking the paper from her hand.

"I'm looking forward to it."

"Me too." He smiled.

Lee walked out of Billy's office just in time to see the latter part of the exchange between the two. He was getting that feeling again. He approached them cautiously, afraid it would show in his demeanor.

"Hey, Lee." Doug stuffed the paper in his breast pocket. "Thanks again for lunch. You know, I was supposed to buy you lunch."

"Next time. I got an idea - what are you doing tonight?"

Doug suspiciously eyed Amanda, who shrugged her shoulders and gave him an apologetic look.

"You aren't working late?" He asked Lee.

"Well, yeah, probably..." Lee answered uneasily, after having watched the silent exchange between them. "...I thought maybe we could meet at Nedlinger's for a drink later - say about ten?"

Doug smiled at Amanda. "Ten sounds great. See you then."

After Doug left Lee looked at Amanda with a raised eyebrow.

"What?" She asked.

"What was that all about?"

"What was what all about?"

"Amanda..."

"Oh, Lee..." knowing how she truly felt about Lee, she was beginning to feel like a child caught with her hand in the cookie jar. Still, he never indicated that he felt the same way, so it wasn't as if she was betraying him. "...Doug...asked me...to dinner."

"What?" Lee laughed slightly.

"I fail to see the humor in that." She stated, angrily.

"No, well...I didn't mean..." he fumbled. "So, you turned him down?" He asked, hopefully.

"Not exactly."

"What do you mean, 'not exactly'." He was a little irritated.

"I gave him my number." She said with a smirk.

"Wait, you're actually considering going out with him? You don't even know him."

She could tell he was bothered, and she sometimes got a kick out of ruffling his feathers.

"Lee, that's how you get to know someone. You go out, have dinner, a few drinks...I would think with all the women you date you'd know how it's done."

"Please..." he said in annoyance.

"Look, if you don't want me to go out with your friend..."

"I didn't say that...why would I have a problem with you going out with Doug? You want to go out with him, go out with him."

"Fine, I will."

"Fine!"

"Fine!" She stormed off.

They barely spoke to each other for the remainder of the day and only in relation to their assignment. Amanda couldn't believe Lee's behavior. After all, he's the one who is always reminding her that there was nothing between them but work.

Doug picked Amanda up promptly at seven two nights later. He took her to a nice place for dinner, then dancing. Conversation came easy to them; they instantly felt very comfortable with one another. He held doors open for her, held her chair out and even shook her hand politely when they said 'good-night'. He was a perfect gentleman.

"So, how was your date?" Lee feigned mild interest. He was eager to find out how it went, but wasn't about to let her know that. It was mid-morning, and he had waited as long as he could stand.

"It was very nice. You were right - Doug really is a great guy. And quite handsome, too." She could hear own voice, trying to sound sincere and hoping Lee couldn't detect the falseness. It wasn't that she didn't like Doug - she did. She just felt like something was missing between them.

"You think he's handsome?" Lee sounded a little irked.

"Yes."

"So, you two hit it off then, huh?" He hoped the disappointment didn't show in his voice.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, Doug asked me to dinner again tonight."

"Tonight? Amanda, I was kind of counting on you to work tonight." He didn't really need her, but, for some reason he didn't even attempt to recognize, he didn't want her to go out with him again.

"Work? On what?"

"Congressman Marsh...remember?" He asked, sarcastically.

"Lee, we have no leads..."

"Which is why we need to put in some extra hours," he cut her off. "Anyway, I'd like to do a little surveillance."

"On who?"

"Andrew Martinson."

"Who?"

"Exactly. Not a household name, but he wants to be - and he's vieing for Marsh's vacant position.

"Enough to kill for it?" Amanda asked, doubtfully.

"People have killed for less."

"Maybe, but I still think this has something to do with his affair." She said, thoughtfully.

"What, you think that after three years his wife decides she's angry enough to kill him? I've heard of pre-meditation, but that's ridiculous."

"No, of course not. It's just...I don't know...there's something there...call it a gut feeling."

Lee chuckled softly. "Well, until you have something more tangible than your 'gut feeling' let's stick with my plan, shall we?"

"Which you're acting on based on nothing more than a gut feeling." Amanda mocked him.

"And ten years experience," he retorted, taking offense.

"O.K., O.K., you're the boss."

The ringing of the telephone stopped him from making any further comments. 'She always seems to get the last word,' he thought to himself as he answered it.

"Hey, how's it going," he smiled into the phone. "What do you say we...what..." Lee's smile faded, "...oh, yeah...she's right here." He looked dejectedly at Amanda. "It's for you...it's Doug."

Lee shuffled papers on his desk, listening to Amanda speaking in low tones, laughing softly and regretfully breaking their date. At three o'clock the next morning she was slightly perturbed that she could have spent a nice evening with Doug instead of sitting in Lee's car all night watching a sleeping house. They had followed Martinson home from his office and observed nothing more than the fact that he had a wife and two small children. It was lights out at ten and boredom until three.

Any other time, Amanda would have gladly given up a date with Doug, or anyone else for that matter, to be in Lee's company. However, Lee was very quiet and distant on this night. She could tell something was bothering him - what's worse, she was pretty sure that 'something' was her. He seemed to be quite agitated with her of late. Her intuition told her he was jealous - but, of what? Her heart hoped he was jealous that she was seeing someone, but, realistically, she figured he was simply upset with her for taking Doug's time away from him.

It was late that afternoon when Lee received a mysterious phone call from a man who claimed to have information on the Marsh murder. He hung up hurriedly, without leaving a name, as if he had been interrupted. With no leads, and the president breathing down Billy's neck, who was breathing down his neck, Lee was becoming increasingly frustrated. To make matters worse, he knew that Amanda had rescheduled her date with Doug for that night and, for reasons he was not ready to admit, he was determined to keep them apart.

"I want to sit on Martinson's house again tonight." Lee told Amanda.

"What? Oh, who's spinning their wheels now. Lee, there's nothing there. Martinson had nothing to do with Marsh's death."

"Oh, and you know that for a fact, do you?" Lee was growing angry. He could sense she was just as determined to go on her date.

"Look, I don't want to break another date with Doug just to sit and watch Martinson sleep all night." Her angered tone matched his.

"Oh, well, we wouldn't want you to miss your precious date just to do your job, now, would we!"

"Oh, please! Even Billy said last night's stakeout was a waste of time!"

Lee gave her a hard stare. "Fine. I'll go myself. What do I need you for, anyway."

"Fine!"

Lee turned toward the Q-Bureau door as if to leave, then looked back at Amanda.

"Tell me something, do you always have to have the last word?"

"I don't always have the last word." She replied, indignantly.

"Yes you do."

"No I don't"

"Amanda!"

"Lee!"

"Oh, just forget it!" He shouted, then quickly stepped out.

"Fine!" He heard her call after him. He momentarily entertained the thought of poking his head in the door for one last remark. Instead, he walked away, shaking his head.

By eleven thirty, Lee decided his lone stakeout was a bust and headed for home. At the last minute, he got a sudden urge to drive by Amanda's. When he pulled up, just out of sight on the opposite side of the street, he was sorry he did. He sat in his car watching them on her front porch. Doug held her hands in his as they talked. Lee turned his head for an instant and when he looked back, they were sharing a lingering kiss. He could feel the blood drain from his face as every one of his muscles tightened. As faced forward he noticed his knuckles were white from the force of the grip he had on the steering wheel.

Lee watched Amanda go inside and slumped down in his seat until he heard Doug drive away. He stared at the house for a while, feeling his anger and jealousy grow. He tore away from the curb, not caring if he woke the whole neighborhood. On his drive home the surge of emotions broke through the wall he so carefully constructed over the years. He was jealous. He was hurting. He was ridiculously angry with Amanda for not sensing how he felt about her. And, he was angry with himself. He finally allowed himself to realize - he was in love with her. He had been in love with her for a long time, but he never told her, and now she was lost to him. He went home alone and sat in silence for an eternity before falling asleep on the couch. As he

slept, he dreamed of Amanda.

PART 3

If at all possible, Lee was even more aloof the following day. He was brooding about something, Amanda could tell. 'Why won't he just talk to me?' 'What is going on with him?' She asked herself these questions, too afraid of getting her head bit off to ask Lee himself. Later in the day, Lee received another phone call from the mystery man. He gave his name as William Jeffers. The name didn't ring a bell, but with Jeffers being the only chance at a lead, Lee agreed to meet with him. He started for the door, but when he saw Amanda get up to follow him, he stopped.

"Where are you going?" He asked, sharply.

"I'm coming with you."

"I don't need you."

Amanda took a step back. His words were like a dagger to her heart. His tone suggested a more personal declaration than a professional one. She stared at the door as it closed after Lee. Was he purposely trying to hurt her? Her face suddenly flushed with anger and she went after him. She rushed to catch up with him. When she did she pulled at his arm.

"Now, wait a minute! Remember me? Your lowly 'part time help'? Your 'agent in training'? I'm supposed to stick by you, so I can watch and learn!" Her biting sarcasm dug into him as his own words came back to haunt him. Had he really said those things? He didn't realize until now how it must have offended her. Part of him wanted to tell her he was sorry, but the headstrong part of him wouldn't allow it.

"Hey, if you want to tag along, tag along - I could care less. Just don't get in the way."

They drove to an abandoned warehouse in silence. The more time they spent together, the more they became aggravated with one another. Somewhere deep inside his emotions, Lee knew his anger toward Amanda was not justified, but continued to lash out, incapable of curbing his feelings. Amanda remained defensive. His behavior kept registering in her mind as that of a jealous man. 'How dare he be jealous!' She thought, seething. 'When he never even so much as hinted that he wanted our relationship to be anything other than professional!'

As Lee parked, he managed to regain some of his professionalism.

"Look, this guy sounded pretty skittish on the phone - I don't want to spook him. You stay here..."

"I don't think that's such a good idea." True, she was angry, but she could never mask her concern for his safety.

"Oh, and why not?" He asked, his temper threatening to rear it's ugly head again.

"You shouldn't go in alone."

"He's a contact, Amanda. You know, a good guy."

She hated his sarcasm. He had an awful way of making her feel terribly inadequate. "You don't know that!" She snapped. "Not all contacts turn out to be 'good guys'. You only met him over the phone. How do you know this isn't a set up?"

"You've been reading too many of your mother's spy novels."

"Fine. If you're not worried, how about you stay in the car and I go in?"

"And do what? Jeffers requested a meet with me, not you. And, what if it is a set up? Exactly what would you do?"

"I can take care of myself! I have been doing this for a couple of years now!"

"Stay in the car Amanda." Lee was growing weary of this repetitious argument.

"You need back up." Amanda would not relent.

"For a contact!?"

"Section 3B of The Agency Training Manual states, '...when meeting with a contact for the first time...'..."

"You quote that manual to me one more time I'll shove it down your..."

Amanda's eyes were wide with shock at Lee's sudden vicious attack. Her tense muscles began to loosen as she realized he was attempting to calm himself.

Lee took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Through clenched teeth he said, "Stay in the car, Amanda - that's an order."

Amanda watched as Lee disappeared into the warehouse. "Stay in the car, Amanda. Stay in the car, Amanda." She mimicked him. "Not this time, buster." She stepped out of the car and carefully made her way to the warehouse entrance.

Once inside, Amanda kept hidden behind stacks of long forgotten boxes. She had a pretty good view of Lee and Jeffers, but had to strain to hear what was being said. As she leaned in a little closer, she caught a flash of black out of the corner of her eye. In that instant, something or someone quickly moved passed her, behind a tower of boxes, bumping them, to her right. She looked up to see the boxes waver and start to fall in her direction, and she managed to jump out of the way just in time.

Lee and Jeffers, startled by the commotion, looked at Amanda, now exposed. Jeffers took off running out the back way. Lee hesitated momentarily, blinded by his sudden rage for Amanda, then ran after Jeffers. He never saw what appeared to be a man, clad in black, fly out the entrance. Amanda caught a glimpse, but not of his face.

The drive back to The Agency was worse than Amanda could imagine. Lee was furious with her, yelling all the way. He lost Jeffers and, with all the man's nervous hemming and hawing, Lee didn't have a chance to get any information out of him. Amanda tried to tell Lee about the man she saw, whom she referred to as 'the phantom', but he wouldn't hear it.

If Lee's raving wasn't bad enough, back at The Agency, she had Mr. Melrose to face as well. While he reprimanded both of them, Lee continued to attack Amanda's competence.

"What is going on with you two!?" Billy was standing behind his desk, Lee and Amanda opposite him. "Your teamwork is falling apart! This is your second screw up this week!" He referred to Lee's wasted effort on Martinson.

"There wouldn't be any mistakes if Amanda would just do as she's told!" Lee snapped back at Billy then, turning to Amanda, "All you had to do was stay in the car!"

"I was careful." She protested.

"Careful!? You call that careful!? You could have raised the dead with all the racket you made going into that warehouse!"

"I told you, that wasn't me!"

Billy's ears perked up at this, but Lee quickly shot her down. "Oh, that's right...the phantom." He ridiculed her.

Once again, Lee managed to make her feel inapt. "Well, that's what he looked like." She said sheepishly.

"Why can't you just admit you screwed up! You spooked the guy and blew our only chance at a lead!"

"I'm not going to admit to something I didn't do!"

"All right, that's enough!" Billy was sick of their bickering. "Amanda..." he started, his voice still edgy.

Amanda quickly stood at attention. "Yes, sir?"

"Lee is the senior agent, is he not?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, agitated.

"He gives you orders, you follow them...without questioning his reasons."

"Well, I do question his reasons..."

"Amanda..." Billy wasn't used to hearing her speak so boldly.

"Sir, the only reason he gives me such lame orders..."

"Lame orders?" Lee interjected.

"...is because he thinks he still needs to hold my hand and protect

me. He doesn't think I can handle myself..."

"Well, I wonder why that is..." Lee spoke caustically.

"There was someone else there!"

Billy pounded his fist on the desk. "I said that's enough! Amanda, you disobey another direct order and you'll be put on suspension. And, as for you..." he turned to Lee, "...we need to talk...privately. Amanda, will you excuse us?"

"Certainly sir."

"What's this about another person?" Billy asked Lee after Amanda left.

"Oh, Billy, she's seeing things. There was no one else there."

"O.K., we'll let that go for now. Now, would you like to tell me what the hell is going on with you two? You're bickering like an old married couple."

Lee gave Billy a disgusted look.

"Does this have anything to do with Doug?"

"Now, why would you think that?" Lee wondered if he was being so transparent.

"Because you and Amanda were getting along fine until he showed up. I understand they're seeing each other. Do you have a problem with this?"

Lee ran his hand nervously through his hair, then looked down at his feet, remaining silent.

"Lee," Billy softened. "If this is the problem - if this is why you have been lashing out at, not just Amanda, but everyone around you - as your boss, I'm telling you to pull yourself together. You are harboring a very unhealthy attitude. And I can't have that. As your friend...as your friend I have to be honest. I've suspected you've had feelings for Amanda for quite some time. If this is true, you should have acted on them. Did you expect her to wait forever for you to come around?"

Lee shifted uncomfortably. He hadn't expected Billy to get so personal.

"You have no right to be jealous or angry." Billy continued. "If it's too late for you and Amanda, you've got no one to blame but yourself."

Lee finally looked up at him. He was at a loss for words. He knew Billy was right, but when it came to Amanda, he seemed to have no control over his emotions. Lee felt a sudden urge to let everything spill out - the way he felt about Amanda; how it hurt to see her kissing Doug - but, this was neither the time nor the place.

"It's not a problem...we'll work it out," was all he could manage

before he turned to leave.

"Well, I hope so, because if you don't...I'm going to have to separate you two." He knew it was an idle threat, but hoped Lee would take it seriously enough to work things out with Amanda.

Lee looked back at Billy, then turned and walked out the door with a worried look on his face.

PART 4

Lee walked into the Q-Bureau to find Amanda seated at her computer, furiously pounding away on the keyboard.

"That's uh...not good for the keyboard." Lee tried for a joke, but missed the mark.

Amanda stopped abruptly and stared straight ahead. "So, you're going to criticize my typing now, are you?"

Lee let out a sigh. "Look, Amanda, we need to talk. We need to work this out. Billy's threatening to split us up."

"Split us up?" She finally looked at him.

"He's starting to doubt our 'partnership'," he said, putting an acerbic emphasis on the last word.

"Well, who could blame him..." Amanda's rage still had a tight hold on her, "...the way you've been acting?"

"The way I've been acting?"

"Yes! Lately, I can't do or say anything right. Ever since..." she hesitated.

"Ever since what?"

"Never mind!"

"No, tell me. I want to know what the 'Great Amanda King' things I'm feeling now!"

"Oh, Lee, just forget it."

"No! I told Billy we'd work this out...now, we're gonna work it out!"

"O.K. Ever since I started seeing Doug you've been acting crazy...snapping at me all the time...for every little thing. You're always so angry." "If I didn't know any better, I would think you were jealous." She added under her breath.

"Jealous!? Jealous of what!?"

'Why is he so impossible!' Amanda asked herself. 'More importantly, why am I in love with him!' She wanted to tell him what she really thought - that he was jealous because she was with Doug instead of

him. But, that would be crossing the line between where she was 'sure' she stood with him and where she only suspected she could stand with him. She decided to play it safe.

"It's all right, Lee. Your friend comes back in to town...you haven't seen him in six years...of course you're going to want to spend a lot of time with him. It's perfectly natural for you to feel a little jealous. Tell you what, I'll back off for a while - that way you two can have some time together."

'She's doing this on purpose,' Lee thought. 'Even she doesn't believe a word of what she's saying.'

"I don't need you to back off...and I'm not jealous."

"I thought you wanted to work this out?"

Lee gave her a distasteful look.

"Well, we're not going to be able to work this out if you won't be honest about your feelings." She felt a twinge of guilt as she said it.

"You want honesty? I honestly don't give a damn if you spend every waking minute with him." He didn't know where the conviction to back up the lie came from, but the pained look on her face told him she believed him. He suddenly wanted the words back, but they hung in the air like an invisible cloud. 'Why couldn't I have just told her the truth? Why am I fighting this?' 'Because she deserves better,' a distant voice in his head answered.

He turned from her, exasperated. "Let's just chalk it up to me having a bad day and leave it at that."

For the first time, Amanda didn't have the last word - she was too choked up to speak. Lee knew he had hurt her. He knew those words weren't the ones she wanted to hear, but he was too confused by his emotions to think clearly - and if he couldn't think clearly he felt it was best to stay out of uncharted waters.

The two of them spent most of the day avoiding each other. Lee hit the streets, making contacts with his 'family', searching for any information about the Marsh murder. Amanda busied herself searching for answers to such questions as 'who, exactly was William Jeffers,' and 'what did he have to do with Congressman Marsh.' She was still determined to find out who he had an affair with as well. She couldn't shake the feeling that 'she' was part of the puzzle.

Nearing the end of the day Lee returned to the office. Amanda was on the phone and, after hearing a bit of the conversation, Lee realized she was talking to Doug. 'I don't believe this!' His mind screamed. 'This is the third time he called her today. And I just left him!' He had met Doug for a late lunch/early dinner just a short while ago, and he was still fuming from their talk.

Doug confided in Lee that he was really falling for Amanda. Their fast-growing relationship seemed to clinch his decision to move back to D.C. The news hadn't sat well with Lee. He had felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. He had grown quiet and hadn't even

finished his dinner. If Doug noticed the change in Lee's demeanor he hadn't mentioned it.

Lee sat at his desk and looked through his mail, slyly glancing up at Amanda every few seconds. When she hung up the phone he said,

"That's the third time he's called. What's the matter, aren't you two going out tonight?"

Amanda cringed at the tone in his voice, but she remained silent. She was not going to get into a confrontation with him this late in the day.

"Just how serious are you two, anyway?" He didn't care how it sounded. He knew how Doug felt, but he had to know if Amanda felt the same.

Amanda looked up at him. "I thought you didn't care." She, clearly, was still very upset with him.

"I don't...just curious." He tried to sound casual.

Lee watched as Amanda stood, donned her jacket and grabbed a stack of papers and her purse. She was half-way to the door when she glanced back over her shoulder at him.

"Well, you can just go on being curious," she said, then turned to leave.

His next words stopped her. "Are you sleeping with him?"

"What!?" Amanda whipped around, a look of disbelief on her face. "How dare you ask such a question! That is none of your business! And, if I was, what makes you think I would tell you!?"

Amanda stormed out of the office, slamming the door behind her. She didn't see the smile; the look of relief on Lee's face. She had inadvertently told him what he wanted to know. He knew her well enough to know that she would never share a bed with a man she wasn't in love with - ergo, she wasn't in love with Doug. Lee sat back in smug satisfaction.

It was 10:00 that evening when Amanda knocked on the door to Lee's apartment. She hated going there after what happened between them earlier, but this was business. She had taken her work home with her and sat, painstakingly, sifting through files, reports and miles of computer data until she pieced together a possible connection. She tried to phone Lee several times, but continued to get a busy signal. So, she gathered up her 'evidence' and headed to his place. She put on her best professional face as the door opened.

"Amanda? What are doing here? Do you know what time it is?"

"Yes I do!" She said, enthusiastically pushing her way passed him. "It's time to wrap up this assignment!"

"Wha..." Lee was still a bit stunned at having found her standing at his door.

"I tried to call - kept getting a busy signal - thought maybe you left the phone off the hook like you do when you're 'entertaining' one of your lady friends..."

"So, you thought you'd come over?" He wisecracked.

"...so, I thought, 'what's more important...Lee having a good time, or solving this murder'..."

"Amanda, could you just get to the point?" Lee was getting annoyed.

"Well, either your phone is off the hook, or it's not working properly."

"That's your point?"

"I'm just saying..."

"Aw, Amanda..." exasperated, he walked over and yanked the handset off the phone and listened. His face changed to one of discontentment.

"Hold on." He said to her as he disappeared into the bedroom.

A minute later he was back. "It was off the hook in the bedroom." He offered, feeling a little embarrassed. "Must have accidentally knocked it off."

"Oh..." Amanda replied knowingly

"When I was making the bed, Amanda! God, you've got a one-track mind!"

Amanda opened her mouth in protest, but he cut her off. "Do you want to tell me what you're doing here, or am I supposed to guess?"

She quickly sat on his couch and began to splay her written information across the table in front of her. She gave him a condensed version of how she spent the past couple of hours, then pointed out what she believed to be relevant to their case. She told him that William Jeffers was actually William Jeffries - whether he purposely stated his name incorrectly or Lee misheard it was not the point. The point was that he, since three months prior, he was working as an assistant to Senator Lawrence Danvers.

Lee was intrigued. "Now, why would an assistant of Danvers have information about Marsh's murder?"

"Or any murder, for that matter." Amanda included. "And that's not even the best part," she added. "I found out who Congressman Marsh had an affair with three years ago."

"We're back to that again?"

"None other than...Kathryn Danvers...wife of Senator Danvers." Amanda smiled, pleased with herself.

Lee's face showed surprise. "Now, that is interesting. Maybe there's a connection there after all. Good work, Amanda. We'll run all this

by Billy in the morning and go from there."

"That's it?" Amanda sounded disappointed.

"Well, what do you want?"

"An apology would be nice."

"I said, maybe there's a connection - it could turn out to mean nothing."

Amanda hastily gathered up her papers, mumbling to herself, "The man's impossible...can't even give me a simple apology...if I'm right, he probably won't even give me any credit..."

Lee stood back, arms crossed, watching, listening and laughing. He sobered up as he walked her to the door.

"Uh, Amanda...how did you find out it was Kathryn Danvers?" He asked as he opened the door for her.

She gave him a curt smile. "I have my ways."

Lee looked at her with disbelief.

"Oh, it'll all be in my report!" She said in frustration as she left Lee standing in his doorway, trying to suppress his laughter.

PART 5

The next morning Amanda was feeling a little better about her relationship with her partner. She didn't know the reason for his fresh attitude, but she welcomed the change. Things seemed almost normal the night before and, while it wasn't exactly what she wanted, it was better than his anger. She was feeling pretty good, humming softly to herself until her thoughts went to Doug. What was she going to do about Doug? He was a nice enough man, but Amanda knew their relationship would go nowhere - she would just fall into a comfortable pattern like she had with Dean. Although she knew there was a very good chance Lee would never come around, she would never feel for Doug what she felt for him.

"Daydreaming again, are you, dear?" Her mother walked into the kitchen and broke into her thoughts.

Amanda gave her a half-hearted smile as she realized she had almost filled the coffee filter with grounds.

"You know, that pot only holds ten cups?" Dottie joked. "Here, let me do it. I like my coffee strong, but not that strong," She said as she poured the grounds back into the container and started over.

"Mother?" Amanda was unsure of discussing her feelings with her mother, but she needed to talk to someone. "How do you know when something's... 'right'?"

"Are we talking about Doug?"

Amanda simply nodded.

"Well, he's nice enough...and handsome." Dottie tried to read into her daughter's thoughts; tried to give her the answers she thought Amanda wanted to hear. Instead she decided honesty was the best policy.

"Amanda, you're not in love with Doug. He's just another Dean. Now, Lee Stetson, on the other hand..."

"Mother..."

"I've seen the way you look at him...all starry eyed." Dottie exaggerated a love-sick expression.

"Oh, I do not," Amanda laughed.

"Yes, you do...and who could blame you...he's polite, charming, handsome and...and, what's more...he looks at you the same way."

Amanda smiled, "Do you really think so?"

"I know so. Believe me, I see the way you two light up when you see each other."

The smile faded from Amanda's face and she waved a hand at Dottie. "It doesn't matter."

"What do you mean it doesn't matter, of course it matters."

"Mother, even if Lee does feel the same way, he would never admit it."

"I know - he's afraid...afraid of falling in love...a lot of men are, you know."

"So, what do you do?"

"You take a deep breath, swallow hard and...make the first move."

"Oh, I couldn't..." Amanda felt her face flush.

"Then you might spend your life pining for him." Dottie's tone was suddenly sorrowful. "In any case, you shouldn't settle for second best." She left the kitchen, leaving Amanda to ponder over her last words.

On the way to work Amanda battled with her thoughts. 'Maybe Mother's right. Maybe I should just come out and tell Lee how I feel. But, what if he makes a joke of it, or, worse, what if he shows his sensitive side and lets me down easy? No, I don't think I could take that.' She thought of a lot of ways she could approach him and, still more ways that he would reject her.

When she arrived, Amanda cautiously opened the door to the Q-Bureau, half hoping to find Lee alone, half hoping to not find him there at

all. What she did walk into was something she never would have imagined. Lee was on the phone, his back to her. She listened, shocked, not only by what he was saying, but by the ease with which the lies rolled off his tongue.

"No, Doug...she isn't here. I don't expect her in at all today. She had to go out of town...family emergency or something. Well, I don't know why she didn't call you. I guess she was just in a hurry. Yeah, I'll tell her...bye."

Lee was overwhelmed with guilt, but he just couldn't stop himself once the first lie was out. He had been feeling pretty good after his last encounter with Amanda - they seemed to be getting back to normal. Then, 'he' had to call and ruin Lee's mood. 'I hope Amanda doesn't find out about this' he thought just as he turned around to see her standing, staring at him in shocked disbelief.

"Uh...Amanda...I...uh..."

"I don't believe you just did that. Why did you do that?" Her shock was turning to anger, her earlier decision to confess her feelings forgotten. "What right do you have disrupting my personal life like that!?"

Lee was trapped. She had caught him red-handed and backed him into a corner with her question. What right did he have? 'Because I'm in love with you and I want him out of your life!' But, when he opened his mouth, something entirely different came out.

"You are getting far too many personal phone calls lately." He said weakly.

"What!?"

"Look, you are spending too much time on the phone and out having a good time and not enough time on this assignment!"

"Oh, really? And, just how many women have you dated this week!?"

"I'll have you know, I haven't dated in months!"

"Oh, is that it? You've hit a dry spell so you're going to ruin my personal life!?"

"You wish! I've put my personal life on the back burner so I can concentrate on work - like you should be doing!"

"Work?! You're crazy! This is the first real assignment we've had in months. Boy, the lies just roll off your tongue, don't they?! Why don't you stop playing games Lee, and tell me what is really going on with you!?"

When he didn't answer Amanda stopped thinking all together. She let her emotions do her bidding.

"You're a coward, Lee Stetson."

Lee's jaw dropped in surprise.

"Oh sure, you can handle being shot at, stabbed and being chased around by a bunch of Russian spies - that's easy. It doesn't involve any emotions except maybe fear - and that's been trained out of you. When it comes to feelings - even your own - you're gutless. You hide behind your 'loner' mask when the truth is, you're just plain lonely. That's why you spend so much time in clubs picking up women, and why you keep your name on the social roster - because, while you really can't stand rubbing elbows with all those rich snobs, you hate being alone even more. But, you'd never admit that, would you Lee? Just like you'd never admit the reason you fill that void with so many different women is because you won't allow yourself to get too close - to anyone. You're afraid, Lee. You're afraid if you get too close to someone you might have to go through the pain of losing them...like your last partner...like your parents."

Amanda was emotionally drained. She couldn't believe she had poured all of it out without thinking. Her heart was beating rapidly and she began to feel ill when she saw the pain in his eyes. The pain quickly turned to anger.

Lee just stood there, glaring at her. He could feel it growing inside him - the rage he felt toward himself for letting his jealousy get the better of him; toward her for taunting him, forcing him to face his emotions. He wanted to scream at the top of his lungs until he was hoarse. Instead, he turned his back to her, trying to regain some control. When he faced her again, he forced a smug look.

"Nice speech, Amanda. Feeling better now?"

"Coward!"

"Knock it off, Amanda!"

"What's the matter, Lee. Did I hit too close to the mark? Tell me, why did you lie to Doug? Are you jealous? Because I'm with him and not you?" There! She'd thrown him a rope - would he pull himself up with it, or hang himself?

"Oh, you wish!" He hung himself.

"Good! Because it would be a cold day in hell before I'd ever get involved with the likes of you!"

Lee tried to cover his pained surprise at her words, but she caught a glimpse of it in his eyes. She hated herself for putting that pain there, but she was determined to break down that wall.

"You're half the man Doug is. He dodged his share of bullets and he wasn't afraid. He's not afraid to feel, or to love...and you know what else? He's a much better kisser than you, too." Why she said it, she didn't know - but it got a reaction from him.

"Now, how the hell would you know that!"

"We've had occasion to kiss..."

"That was work..."

"Oh, there's a difference?"

"Kissing you was no bed of roses for me either!"

"You're such a coward!" She repeated, heading for the door.

"Coward!?" Lee breathed through clenched teeth as he rushed to stop her.

In his fury, he spun her around to face him, grabbing her by the arms and pinning her against the door. Amanda's mind raced. Did he mean to hit her? Was he that angry? She was afraid, but she wouldn't let him see. She struggled against his hands then, taking her totally by surprise...he kissed her. It wasn't a gesture of love - he was trying to prove something, and, although she could feel her body reacting to being kissed by him, it wasn't what she wanted. Not like this. As she felt his forceful lips parting against hers, she gathered her strength and managed to push him away. Then, she slapped his face hard enough to leave a handprint.

Lee took a step back, rubbing his cheek. Whether his shocked expression was due to the slap or his own actions, she didn't know. And she didn't wait to find out. She hurried out of their office. Halfway down the corridor, Amanda heard a loud thud behind her. She didn't look back.

Back inside the office, Lee was leaning against his desk, rubbing his swelling hand, staring at the hole he had just put in the wall.

Amanda was walking briskly, holding back the urge to run. She could feel the tears stinging her eyes, threatening to fall. She had to get out of there. Her mind was racing. She couldn't believe Lee would force himself on her like that. Was it her fault? Had she pushed him too far? Did he really want to kiss her like that, or had he meant for her to be put off by it? Was he reaching out, or still trying to push her away? She was so confused. She had to get out of there...she needed to...

"Whoa! Amanda..." Billy had grabbed her arms to steady her.

Amanda was half-way down the stairs, not paying attention, when she ran smack into the section chief on his way up. Shortly before, Mrs. Marsten had called Billy when she heard the shouting match between Lee and Amanda and he was on his way to intercede.

Moments later, Amanda sat in Billy's office, hands clutching a ball of tissue in her lap, the tears still drying on her face. When she could finally speak, she looked directly into Billy's eyes.

"Sir, I'd like an immediate transfer from the Q-Bureau. I can't work with Lee anymore."

PART 6

Amanda lied to Billy, telling him that the argument with Lee was about their assignment; that they couldn't agree on anything. Although Mrs. Marsten had told Billy she couldn't make out what was

being said - just that there was a lot of yelling - he saw through Amanda's fabrication. His first inclination was to grant her request, but decided against it.

"Amanda, I understand how you feel, but you have to consider my position. For one thing, I can't pull you off an assignment once you've started..."

"Sir, it's not like we've established any kind of cover or anything..."

"I realize that, but you and Lee are the agents of record. I can't just pull one of you off."

Amanda sat back in her chair in frustration.

"And another thing," Billy walked around to the front of his desk and sat on the edge of it, looking her in the eyes. "Whatever is going on between you two - whether it's a professional conflict or a personal one..."

Amanda looked away from Billy, feeling like he could read her thoughts.

"...it's not going to be solved by separating you. You and Lee have to work through this. You're suppose to be partners..."

"I'm not his partner...I'm his 'part time help'. Just ask him."

"Amanda, you need to try and look passed Lee's words. Deep down, you know he thinks of you as his partner."

"I guess." Amanda felt defeated.

"Look, I'll talk to Lee. In the meantime, I need you to stick with this assignment. With Dr. Smith away, I'm the one getting chewed out by the president every day. We've got to get some answers."

"Can I at least work down here? I can't be up there alone with him...I can't..."

"Amanda..."

"Sir, you've got to give me something." Amanda said, desperately.

Billy sighed heavily. "All right...for now. But, I want you in constant communication with Lee...and I want you two to work out your differences. I know I don't say this often, but you're the best team I've got. It may not seem like it right now, but you work beautifully together...and I really hate to see a good partnership come to an end."

"All right, sir. I'll do my best."

"You always do." Billy smiled, receiving a smile in return. "Lewis is out of the country for a few weeks...you can take his desk."

"Thank you, Sir."

Shortly after Amanda left, Billy called Lee down. As Lee entered the bull pen, he saw Amanda, sitting at Lewis' desk, making it neat. He cast his eyes downward...he couldn't face her. She saw him, out of the corner of her eye, enter Billy's office and she hoped she would have enough time to run upstairs to get what she needed before he came out.

Lee sat in Billy's office, half listening to what was being said. He couldn't stop thinking about what transpired earlier. 'What the hell's the matter with me!? How could I treat Amanda like that? She's not some cheap floozy. I can't believe I did that!'

"Scarecrow!? Have you heard a word I've said!?" Billy snapped.

"Yeah, yeah, Billy. I heard you. Amanda's working down here, but we're still working on the same assignment...I got it."

"Look, Lee..." there was a knock on the door. "Yeah!" Billy was annoyed by the interruption.

The door opened and Francine walked in, followed by Amanda.

"Sorry to interrupt," Francine told Billy, then, handing Lee a photograph, "Does this guy look familiar?"

Lee took the photo of a dead man from Francine, recognizing him right away as William Jeffries.

"What the hell..." Lee asked in surprise.

"They fished him out of the Potomac this morning..." Francine started.

"Well, why the hell wasn't I notified!" Lee shouted.

"Hey, nobody knew who he was until Amanda saw this," Francine answered, gesturing to the picture.

Lee looked up at Amanda, then quickly averted his eyes. He didn't think he would ever be able to look her in the eyes again.

"Oh." was all Lee could manage.

"We only got this because the locals found a government issued car abandoned nearby and thought there might be a connection. He had no I.D. on him." Francine finished, looking from Amanda to Lee.

"You two better get out there and see what you can find out." Billy said to them.

Lee and Amanda simultaneously glanced at one another, then quickly turned away, both looking very uncomfortable. The exchange did not go unnoticed by Francine who raised her eyebrows at Billy.

Billy cleared his throat. "Francine." He nodded toward the door.

"Right." Francine swiftly left the office.

"Well, Amanda," Billy started, "it looks like your 'phantom' may not be so imaginary after all."

"What do you mean?" Amanda was surprised that someone was finally taking her seriously.

"Obviously the murderer knew Jeffries had information he was willing to share. The only way they could have known that was if they were watching him. Are you sure you can't remember anything else about the man you saw?"

"I'm sorry, sir. All I really saw was a blur."

"I think it's time we have a talk with Senator Danvers." Lee was still looking at the photo.

"Based on what?" Billy wanted to know.

"Based on the fact that two men who are connected to him are now dead, which, in my book, makes him our number one suspect."

"Forget it, Lee. You don't have enough evidence. Jeffries was one of many of Danvers' office staff, and he may not even know about his wife's affair...wouldn't that be nice of you to drop that in his lap?" Billy waved a hand at Lee. "The senator and his wife are out of the country until Friday anyway."

"Great. Book me on a flight and I'll track them down..."

"Yes, and then you can come back here and clean out your desk...Lee, he's not going to disappear...he's a senator. They're due back on Friday...you'll just have to wait."

"In the meantime, we're suppose to sit on our hands, right?" Lee asked in aggravation.

"In the meantime, you two are going to investigate Jeffries' murder."

Amanda and Lee glanced at each other uncomfortably again.

Billy let out a sigh. "Look, I expect you two to act in a professional manner. Set your differences aside, and see this assignment through. Then...if you still feel you can't work things out...I'll honor Amanda's request for a transfer."

Lee looked at Amanda in surprise. It was the first time he kept his eyes on her for more than a split second. She looked down at the floor, unable to face him.

After an uncomfortable silence Billy said, "Well, you'd better get going before the locals trample on all the evidence."

The drive to the crime scene was quiet. Lee was too ashamed, still silently cursing himself for his behavior, to even look at Amanda. She was too embarrassed, a part of her feeling a twinge of happiness at his attempt to kiss her, to speak to him. There own search of the area turned up nothing, however, the police turned over what evidence they had - a preliminary report stating that Jeffries appeared to

have been shot in the back of the head, at close range, with a 22. caliber weapon and a torn piece of black cloth, with traces of blood on it, found near the body.

With Friday being 2 days away and having nothing to do but wait for lab results on the evidence, the two agents found that they, indeed, had a lot of time on their hands. Amanda took advantage of the time by calling Doug and inviting him to meet her for coffee. She had sensed his feelings for her were starting to get serious and, knowing she could never return those feelings, she felt a little guilty - as if she had been leading him on. She knew it was the right thing to do - she had to talk to him.

They met at a quaint coffee shop, a place where Amanda and her mother had had lunch a few times. The food was pretty good, but she wasn't there to eat. As a matter of fact, she was feeling a bit nauseous as she sat, waiting for Doug. She was a little nervous and not exactly sure what she was going to say to him. When he arrived, he gave her a quick kiss on the cheek and slid into the booth across from her.

After 20 minutes of coffee and small talk, Doug looked down and sighed into his cup.

"O.K., that's enough of that."

"What do you mean?" Amanda offered a weak smile.

"Oh, come on, Amanda...you didn't invite me here to talk about the weather."

Her smile faded. "You're right...I'm sorry, Doug. I shouldn't have asked you to meet me here...this is not the place for this...maybe we should..."

"Amanda..." he interrupted her. This was difficult for him. He knew what was coming.

"I'm pretty sure I know what's about to happen here and, if it's all the same to you, I'd prefer not to prolong it."

"I don't know what to say..." she didn't want to hurt him. She really did like him.

"Why don't you just try the truth...that you're in love with Lee?"

Amanda looked up in surprise, "No...I..." she attempted denial.

"Amanda..." Doug smiled, "I've known all along. I guess... I was just hoping I had a chance...to steal your heart from him."

"It's really not like that..."

"No...no it isn't. It's much more serious...because, whether you realize it or not, he's very much in love with you, too." He chuckled at, yet another, surprised look from Amanda.

"Don't tell me you haven't noticed his jealous

behavior?"

"Yes...well, I..." she stammered.

"Lee's problem is he's just too..." the word 'stupid' came to mind, "no, that would be mean," he said aloud. Then, after thinking a moment, "Lee has always been his own man. Never needed, or wanted, to depend on anybody or anything. Whether he knows it or not...he depends on you...a great deal, as a matter of fact. He depends on you to stand beside him...right or wrong, to always be there...to always hold that secret love for him in your heart. He sees you dating me as an attempt to break away. He's fighting with himself. He doesn't want to be in love with you, because that might mean that he may, someday, have to face the pain of losing you..."

"Like his parents." Amanda interjected, softly.

"Right. At the same time, he can't stand seeing you with another man because, well, then he's losing you. It may seem selfish, but it really isn't. He's just..."

"A coward." She said it without thinking.

Doug laughed. "Well, yeah, I guess when it comes to this, he is. You frighten him. Or, more accurately, his feelings for you frighten him."

They sat in silence for a while. The waitress came by to offer more coffee, but they both declined with a wave of their hands.

"I'm not going to lie to you," Doug finally spoke, "I was really hoping we had something going here...but...I can't compete with what's happening between you and Lee."

"I'm really sorry, Doug. I wasn't trying to...I never meant to..."

"I know, Amanda, I know."

"You really are a good man, you know that?"

"I don't know...I did try and steal you away from Lee." They both laughed at this as they got up to leave.

That evening, Amanda received a phone call from Billy.

"Amanda, I need you to get over to the 'Marsh' home right away...Lee's already on his way over there...there's been a break-in..."

PART 7

When Amanda arrived at the Marsh home she was ushered inside by a fellow agent. She was careful not to disturb anything as she made her way through the disheveled living room to Lee, who was clumsily trying to comfort a very shaky Laura Marsh. As Amanda approached them Lee stepped back allowing her to take over. Once the woman was somewhat calmer Lee filled Amanda in.

The intruder was obviously searching for something, but nothing appeared to be missing. The safe upstairs had been tampered with, but, whoever it was, could not get it opened. Mrs. Marsh was supposed to have been gone all night, but came home early and apparently surprised the perpetrator. However, she hadn't seen or heard anything.

Mrs. Marsh allowed them access to her late husband's safe. In it was a large envelope containing various photocopied documents, such as budget reports, bank statements, etc. pertaining to Senator Danvers.

"Mrs. Marsh, I know your husband was campaigning to 'clean house', so to speak...was he involved in some sort of investigation on Senator Danvers?" Lee asked as he scanned the documents.

"Larry? Oh, heavens, no. They were friends. Frank may have been working on something for him..."

"We'll need to take these." He said, stuffing the papers back in the envelope and handing it to Amanda.

"Laura..." Amanda placed a comforting hand on her arm. "Maybe you shouldn't stay here tonight..."

"Oh, do think whoever it was will be back," she asked fearfully.

"No, no...it's just that, well, I know how unsettling a thing like this can be - my house was broken into a few years ago - and I remember, I just couldn't bear to be alone in the house after the police left. I spent the night at a friend's. Do you have somebody you can call?"

"Yes...I think you're right...I...I don't want to be alone. Will you excuse me?" She left the room without waiting for a reply.

"Good thinking." Lee offered, still unable to look her in the eye, but somehow managing to maintain professionalism. "Get her out of the house and maybe our mystery guest will take another shot at it. I'll have a couple of our guys baby-sit the house. I think we just might get some answers out of these." He tapped the envelope.

"What are you going to do?" Amanda was having the same difficulty with eye contact.

"WE are going to go to the agency and go through these documents to find out what Marsh found out that got him killed."

She smiled inwardly at the fact that he had included her. "O.K...but let's try to avoid that last part, shall we."

Lee smiled to himself. 'She's joking with me again,' he thought. 'That's a good sign.'

They didn't have to study the papers long before they realized what they were looking at. Friend or not, Congressman Marsh had somehow gathered enough evidence to prove Senator Danvers was embezzling funds. Lee and Amanda succeeded in holding their personal problems in

check for the evening and came together as a team. They determined that Marsh had someone gathering information for him - Jeffries.

Jeffries had only been with Senator Danvers for three months. The earliest documents were dated shortly after Jeffries got on board. He was a trusted friend of Danvers so no one would have given a second thought to him looking at files or even having access to Danvers' office when he was away. The senator obviously put his trust in the wrong people. He had two separate motives for wanting Marsh dead and at least one for killing Jeffries, but the question remained - if Danvers had been out of the country the whole time, who was doing his bidding? And, who was at the Marsh estate earlier that evening?

The partners were pondering the questions when something on one of the documents caught Amanda's eye.

"What is this?" She said, almost to herself.

"What?" Lee looked up from his desk.

He watched as Amanda tore a blank sheet off a note pad, placed it on top of the paper before her, then proceeded to rub over it with a pencil.

"What are you doing?" He asked, getting up and walking over to her desk.

"There are impressions of something written here." She continued rubbing as Lee walked around her desk to stand behind her and look over her shoulder.

When Amanda completed the task, they both stared at what the pencil rubbing revealed:

KATHRYN 3:00 CLARION HOTEL RM 203

"Kathryn?" Lee mused.

"As in Danvers." Amanda stated.

"Maybe they picked up where they left off three years ago."

"Or, maybe the affair never ended."

"So it never ended, so what. What does that have to do with anything?" Lee asked, exasperated.

"Maybe...maybe it was Kathryn Danvers..." she thought aloud.

"Maybe what was Kathryn Danvers..." he saw the gleam in her eye. "Aw, now, wait a minute Amanda...you honestly think that the senator's wife...no...no...that's crazy. And, anyway, they're both out of the country - have been all week - remember?"

"Wait a minute..." Amanda jumped out of her chair and hurried around behind Lee's desk, where several newspapers were strewn about.

"What?" Lee followed her in bewilderment.

"Where is it...where is it..." she was frantically searching through the pile of papers.

"What are you looking for?"

"Sunday's paper."

"You're not going to find it there, Amanda...that was four days ago..."

"Of course I'm going to find it. You're a pack rat. You never throw anything away." She said as she continued her search.

"Pack rat? Hey, I throw stuff away."

"You forget. I've been in your apartment. You've got food in your refrigerator that has grown legs and started to revolt...AH HA!" She rose, triumphantly, clutching a newspaper in her fist and giving him an 'I told you so' look.

Amanda laid the paper across Lee's desk and flipped through pages until she came to a small article that included a picture. The caption under the photo read:

SENATOR DANVERS LEAVES FOR MUNICH.

She pointed this out to him.

"So?"

"So, it doesn't say Senator Danvers and his wife..."

"Of course not..." he interrupted her, "the fact that she went with him isn't news worthy."

"Look at the picture, Lee. Where is she? There are people all around him, but no Mrs. Danvers."

"So she missed a photo opportunity..."

"I'm telling you, she didn't go!" Amanda was determined to convince him.

"Another 'gut feeling'?" Lee smirked.

"Call it whatever you like, but, I'm telling you...Kathryn Danvers never left D.C." She stated adamantly.

Lee shrugged his shoulders. "Let's find out if your hunch is correct."

They headed for the airport. Once there, Amanda managed to confuse the ticket agent long enough to allow Lee to get a look at the passenger list for Sunday. Mrs. Danvers was listed as a no show. They decided it was time to talk to Billy.

When Amanda and Lee got back to The Agency it was just after 7:00 a.m. Friday morning - they had been up all night. Billy had just arrived and was settling behind his desk, getting ready to enjoy his

coffee and donut. He looked up as the agents entered his office after giving the door a quick rap. Billy looked from one to the other, then cocked an eyebrow.

"Sleep in those clothes, did you?"

"Very funny, Billy." Lee smirked.

Amanda didn't waste any time. "Sir, we have reason to believe that Kathryn Danvers is behind the murders."

"Whoa! Hold on a minute, Amanda. It's obvious you're suffering from a lack of sleep."

"Just hear us out, Billy." Lee pleaded.

"Us?" Billy smiled at them. They both shifted nervously, as the fact that they still had unresolved issues was brought to the surface again.

"Let me show you what we've got." Lee broke the tension.

He proceeded to recount his and Amanda's efforts and findings since meeting at the Marsh home. Together they decided the best plan of action was to have a talk with Mrs. Danvers, as the evidence they had was merely circumstantial. They had no weapon and no witnesses. Lab results had shown that the blood on the cloth found at the scene was not Jeffries' and, although it could have belonged to the killer, there was nothing pointing to the senator's wife.

Lee and Amanda took the documents with them to the Danvers' home to question Kathryn about them and, as she was getting out of the car, Amanda noticed someone peering out of an upstairs window. She said nothing, at first, as she followed a half-step behind Lee up the walkway to the front door. They rang the bell and shortly afterward were greeted by the maid.

"Yes? May I help you?"

"We're with the government..." Lee said, flashing his I.D. "We'd like to speak with Mrs. Danvers regarding the senator's return."

The maid studied the I.D., as well as, the two agents. "If you're with the government you must know Mrs. Danvers is out of the country with Mr. Danvers."

"We know Mrs. Danvers didn't go with her husband." Amanda spoke up.

The woman standing before them played nervously with the collar of her uniform.

"I'm sorry...I was told to say that. Actually...Mrs. Danvers is at her doctor's. She has been ill all this week."

"Could you give us the name of her doctor?" Amanda pushed, and Lee gave her a disapproving look.

"Oh, I'm sorry...I couldn't do that...perhaps if you come back later..."

"Yes, maybe we'll do that. Thank you for your time." Lee said, then, realizing Amanda was about to speak, he discreetly tugged at her sleeve to stop her.

The maid closed the door as Lee turned to leave, with Amanda reluctantly following.

"Lee, there was someone in that upstairs window."

"I know."

"You saw her too?"

"Yeah. Probably Mrs. Danvers."

"Then we should go back and talk to her."

"Amanda, it's not going to get us anywhere. I think we need a different approach."

"Such as?"

"I've been thinking...maybe she's the one you saw in that warehouse..."

"You mean you finally believe me?"

"Amanda...I'm sorry, okay. You were right, I was wrong - can we get passed that?"

"Yeah, sure." She was less than enthusiastic about his pathetic attempt at an apology.

"What am saying is...if she was the one in the warehouse, then she knows who we are...and if she saw us from the window, then she knows we're on to her. She's not a pro and she's got to be getting pretty desperate. I say we sit tight and wait for her to make her next move."

CONCLUSION

Lee made a show of driving away from the house, but circled around and parked up the street where they had a clear view. It was two hours before they saw her leave the house. Kathryn Danvers, clad in black slacks, a black sweatshirt and a black beanie cap, donning a pair of sunglasses, slipped behind the wheel of her car. They watched as she pulled out onto the street and drove off. Lee followed keeping a safe distance, although he was pretty sure she wouldn't have even noticed them.

They followed her to the residence of Laura Marsh and watched as she made her way around the back after realizing no one was home.

"Amanda," Lee said, grabbing the envelope.

"I know, I know...stay in the car."

"No...I want you to go around back...give her a few minutes to get upstairs...then follow her in. I'll go in through the front."

Amanda just stared at him. She couldn't believe he was actually telling her to do something for a change.

"Well...go."

"Right." She said as she got out of the car. She didn't see Lee smile and shake his head.

They met at the foot of the stairs and they could hear movement in the upstairs study. Lee quietly made his way up with Amanda close behind. Just outside the study, he motioned for her to stay out of sight. He peered in. Mrs. Danvers' back was to them, frantically trying to pry open the safe. Lee stealthily stepped inside the room and stopped several feet from the woman.

"Looking for these?" He asked, dangling the envelope in front of him.

Kathryn quickly turned around and stepped back in shock, but regained composure in an instant. She pulled out a gun she had tucked in her jeans and pointed it at Lee as he reached for his own weapon - it was a stand off. Just then, Amanda appeared, her own gun drawn.

"Now, which one of us do you think you're gonna get before the other one drops you?" Amanda asked her.

Mrs. Danvers looked from one to the other then, realizing there was no way out, dropped her weapon.

An hour later two agents were waiting to pick up Senator Danvers on embezzlement charges. He knew nothing of his wife's activities that week. He hadn't even been aware of her affair with Frank Marsh. The affair had, indeed, ended three years prior, but Frank, in trying to get more information on her husband, duped Kathryn into believing he wanted to rekindle the flame.

Mrs. Danvers' confession was cold and showed no remorse. She was angry that Frank had used her and even more so that he was trying to destroy her husband. With Frank going back to his wife and her husband's career ending, she was left with nothing. She couldn't have that - she was used to a certain way of life. As for Jeffries - she learned that he was the one giving Frank information and that he planned to meet with Lee after Frank's death so she shut him up too, with a bullet to the back of the head. She had torn the very slacks she was wearing and received a nasty gash on her leg while she was dragging his body to the river. In the end, the motive was nothing more than greed.

Amanda and Lee were sitting in Billy's office, still discussing Mrs. Danvers cold demeanor when Billy walked in.

"I guess you were right." Amanda said to Lee.

"Right about what?"

"When you said, 'people have killed for less.'"

"Yeah. I guess to her money and status was the most important thing."

Billy smiled as he listened, then, "Well, you two did a great job as usual. I knew putting you together was a good idea."

They glanced at one another and looked away uncomfortably.

"I see you still have unresolved issues."

Neither spoke. There was a knock on the door and Francine entered.

"Here's that file you wanted," she said, handing it to Billy. She started to leave then turned back.

"Oh, Amanda, I understand Doug's leaving tonight. Do be a dear and tell him 'good-bye' for me, will you?" She was trying to get a rise out of Lee.

"Sorry, Francine, I won't be seeing him."

"Oh?" Francine asked curiously.

"No future in long-distance romances." Amanda responded matter-of-factly and, before Francine could comment, "Sir, if there's nothing else, I'll get started on the report..."

"That won't be necessary, Amanda," Billy cut her off, "Monday's soon enough. I think you two have earned the rest of the day off. Why don't you use it - and the week-end - to take care of that matter we discussed?"

Lee and Amanda looked at each other again and Francine was a little miffed that she was being kept out of the loop on that one. They took Billy up on his offer. Amanda went home and spent some quality time with her family and Lee met with Doug to say their good-bye's.

Lee sat across from Doug in the bar. They were having one last drink together.

"Are you sure I can't drive you to the airport tonight? I really don't mind."

"I'm sure Lee. I got it covered."

"Listen...Doug...I'm sorry I haven't had much time for you..."

"Don't worry about it. I understand. I know the business, remember?"

"I'm uh...sorry things didn't work out between you and Amanda."

"No you're not." Doug smiled at him as Lee gave him a surprised look.

"Look, Lee...I'm not stupid. Do you think I don't know what's going on here?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh come on, Lee. Amanda's a beautiful, intelligent, warm, caring, wonderful woman. You'd be crazy not to be in love with her."

"What...?" Lee laughed nervously.

"Don't...not with me. I know you...I know how think. I'm telling you, my friend, you'd better get your head on straight with this one. Forget your past...throw caution to the wind...go to her...tell her how you feel about her."

Lee let out a sigh.

"Lee, I get the feeling she's been waiting a long time for you to come around, but she isn't going to wait forever. A perfect example...she gave me a shot."

"What happened between you two anyway?" Lee tried to change the subject.

"I'm not you. She's in love with you, man. You've got to be blind not to see that. You're missing out on a good thing. It's like you're throwing away this beautiful gift without even unwrapping it."

"It's not that simple, Doug." He said sadly.

"Maybe not, but it's not as hard as you're making it out to be. What's the matter, are you that scared?"

Lee looked at his friend. He knew Doug was right, but how could go to Amanda now...after what he'd done? How would he explain his actions? And, hadn't she as much as said she didn't want him? Perhaps that was just a reflex to his own words. Doug broke into his thoughts.

"Go to her...tell her you love her."

Those were the last words his friend spoke to him before they parted company, and they stuck in his mind - on the way home, where he showered and changed; on the way to the florist, where he picked up a dozen roses; on the way to Amanda's front door, where he stood trying to convince himself to ring the bell.

He finally got up the courage to press the doorbell, although he still wasn't quite sure what he would say. When Amanda opened the door she was in her bare feet, wearing an old pair of blue jeans and an oversized sweatshirt and she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

"Uh...I...uh...are you alone?" Lee stammered.

"Yes...go away." She started to close the door.

"Amanda, wait!" He held the door open with one hand, the other behind his back.

She gave him a stern look and he returned it with a sheepish grin as he produced the roses from behind his back.

"Those are for me?" She softened.

"Yeah."

Amanda opened the door and allowed Lee to enter. He waited for her as she went to the kitchen to put the roses in a vase. He watched as she placed them in the center of the table.

"They're very beautiful...thank you." She said when she returned.

"Well I...you're welcome. Amanda...I'm...really sorry...about everything. You're right...I don't treat you like my partner and I should...I want us to be partners. Billy's right...we work well together."

"I see. So, this is your way of asking me not to transfer?"

"Well...yeah."

"All right. I'll think about. I'll let you know what I've decided on Monday." She started toward the door as if to see him out.

"Amanda, I...about what happened the other day...you were right, okay...everything you said - my lifestyle...my lack of commitment...the fact that I'm...a coward when it comes to emotional stuff...you were right."

Amanda started to feel a little uncomfortable, realizing how hard this was for him.

"You were right about something else. I...I was...jealous. Not of you...of Doug...because you were with him and...I...I wanted you to be...with...me." Lee let out a relieved sigh, having revealed the truth.

"Oh...so that's what that...display was all about?" She realized how cruel it sounded after she had said it.

Lee looked at the floor, ashamed, then looked up at her again.

"Amanda, I am so sorry. I know my behavior was totally out of line. I was just angry and frustrated and...when you compared me to Doug like that...I don't know..."

She lowered her head, feeling a little guilty herself - knowing how angry he was, she purposely goaded him with the comparison. She had pushed him too far. She started to tell him as much, but he interrupted her.

"I wanted to kiss you." He blurted out. "I have...for a long time. But...not like that...that's not the way I wanted it to be."

Amanda stared at him in disbelief. She didn't know what to say. She had waited for so long for him to admit his feelings for her, and now, here he was, pouring his heart out...and she was at a loss for words. Lee mistook her silence for rejection.

"I, uh...just came over to apologize." He tried to recover. "I...I don't, uh...I hope that you'll reconsider transferring. I give you my word...nothing like that will ever happen again." He turned and started for the door.

"Lee, wait..." it came out in a whisper.

He turned to face her.

"Show me." She requested, shyly. "How you really wanted to kiss me." She answered his questioning look.

The corners of Lee's mouth turned up slightly. He walked toward her and hesitantly placed his hands on her waist, his eyes never leaving hers. Amanda placed her hands on his chest smiling up at him and receiving a warm smile in return. He bent to kiss her - a feather-light touch to her lips, then hesitated. Slowly pulling her closer, he encircled her waist as she slid her hands up his chest to wrap her arms around his neck.

They smiled at one another again before their lips met in a deep, passionate kiss. And, as she experienced the softness of his lips and the warmth of his mouth on hers, she felt her knees weaken and her body start to tremble. This was the kiss she was waiting for. She tightened her arms slightly and gently slipped her fingers through his hair and, in doing so caused a shiver to race up his spine. This was the way he had meant to kiss her.

"That was much better." Amanda said, breathlessly after they reluctantly parted.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"What about Doug?"

Amanda was confused. Lee knew she had stopped seeing Doug even before he left.

"What about him?"

"Well, you said...he was a better kisser."

"Oh, yes, well...I think...I might need another...sample...you know...for comparison."

"I think you might be right." He whispered just before their lips met again.

"Well?" Lee asked when they parted the second time.

Amanda smiled. "Doug who?"

He smiled back and attempted another kiss, but she moved her hands to his chest and held him back.

"No bed of roses?" She asked, raising an eyebrow.

He chuckled softly and said, "No...no bed of roses...an entire field of them."

"I don't think roses grow in fields."

"Come here," he said as he pulled her close again, all the love he felt for her shining in his eyes, and kissed her once more.

THE END

End
file.